



Loudoun County Health Department

*"Working to ensure and improve the health
of the residents of Loudoun County"*



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Spotlight on Our Staff...

Geri Alexander

**Program Support Technician
8 Years with the Health Department**

Most uninsured children in Loudoun County live in low-income families that have at least one working parent. One of the key missions of the Loudoun County Health Department is to provide essential health services to those of our most vulnerable residents unable to obtain medical care.

I enjoy being part of this dynamic, fast-paced, and highly visible organization. I get a great feeling knowing that I am part of an agency that provides a much-needed service to those in our community with special needs in whatever way we can.

Our staff consists of a caring, understanding group of people who are trained in Public Health. They are easily accessible to assist in the health needs and concerns of our community.

On the whole, my experience with Loudoun County Health Department has been very rewarding, both as an employee and as someone who enjoys helping the community. As our county continues to grow I look forward to continuing to meet the needs of our County's most vulnerable residents.

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April 1 to 7 is National Public Health Week

National Public Health Week is a designated time each year that recognizes the essential contributions of Public Health to improving the health and longevity of all Americans.

Over the past 50 years, the United States and Loudoun County have achieved significant increases in life expectancy and reductions in the incidence of infections, childhood deaths, and disease.

Over the past year, Loudoun County's public safety and health departments have been working closely with our medical community, schools and elected and appointed officials to keep all of our citizens safe from anthrax and other forms of bioterrorism.

The Health Department has also taken the lead in keeping our residents safe from West Nile virus and Lyme disease, and contributed to keeping our environment and our water supply safe for our families and ourselves.

Each of us in Loudoun plays a crucial role in improving the health of our county. We do this by:

- making sure our children's immunizations are up to date
- getting routine mammograms, colonoscopies and check-ups
- maintaining a reasonable weight and getting regular exercise
- wearing seatbelts and using age-appropriate car seats for our children
- periodically testing the smoke detectors in our homes
- drinking alcohol in moderation and not drinking and driving
- not using tobacco products

Are You at Risk for Cervical Cancer?

What is cervical cancer?

The cervix is the lower part of a woman's uterus, or womb. It connects the uterus to the vagina.

Cervical cancer is a cancer that starts in the woman's cervix. If not found early enough, the cancer can spread throughout the body.

How common is cervical cancer?

Changes to the lining of the cervix are very common. Many of these changes, if not found soon enough, can turn into cervical cancer.

In the 1950s, cervical cancer was one of the top killers of women. Fortunately, more and more women are getting regular gynecologic (pelvic) examinations. Annual pelvic exams allow these changes to be found earlier and treated before they turn into cancer.

Today, cervical cancer comprises about 2% of all cancers found in the United States, killing about 5,000 women each year.

Who is at risk for cervical cancer?

All women are at risk. Specific factors that increase a woman's risk for cervical cancer include:

1. **Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection.** This common cause of skin warts also causes cervical cancer and is spread from person to person through sexual contact. There is no known cure for HPV infection.
2. **Sexual contact.** In addition to regular Pap smears, a woman's best protection from getting cervical cancer is to postpone first sexual contact, and, for those who are sexually active, to have a minimum number of sexual partners and to always use barrier protection, such as condoms.
3. **Tobacco.** Women who smoke are twice as likely to get cervical cancer as are nonsmokers.
4. **Inability to access medical care.** Women without health insurance, minorities, and those who can't afford to regularly see their doctor are less likely to get Pap smears and, consequently, more likely to die from cervical cancer.

How is cervical cancer diagnosed?

As part of a pelvic examination, the health care provider inspects the cervix for any abnormalities. Additionally, the clinician will take a Pap test, or smear, to check for cancer.

A Pap smear is quick and relatively painless and is the number one reason why deaths from cervical cancer have declined so much over the past 40 years.

To do a Pap test, the clinician inserts a speculum, a tool that allows her to view the cervix, into the vagina. Cells from the cervix are then collected with a wooden stick, called a spatula, or a plastic brush. The cells are placed on a slide or in a liquid and sent to the laboratory for testing.

How is cervical cancer treated?

If found before the abnormal cells change into cancer, effective treatment can be done through a simple procedure in your doctor's office.

If the abnormal cells are not found until after they become cancerous, treatment may require surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy.

What are the other benefits of a Pap test?

In addition to diagnosing cancer, a Pap smear can detect other changes in the cervix that may or may not turn into cancer.

A Pap smear can also detect a variety of infections, including trichomonas, herpes and yeast infections, and can help diagnose abnormalities in female hormone levels.

Who should get a Pap test?

All women should get routine breast and pelvic examinations that include a Pap smear beginning at age 18 or at the time of their first sexual experience, whichever is earlier.

Where can I find out more about cervical cancer?

Important information on cervical cancer and the importance of routine screening examinations is available online from the Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp and the American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org.



Protect Your Hearing

When was the last time you had your hearing checked?

For most people, the answer is probably never and yet hearing is just as important as sight.

Helen Keller, who was deaf as well as blind, said she would choose her hearing if she could have one sense restored because being blind cut her off from things but deafness cut her off from people.

Hearing loss is our most common physical disability; Americans are going deaf at younger ages. According to the National Institute on Deafness and Communication Disorders (NIDCD), **approximately 28 million Americans are deaf or hard of hearing, of whom about 1.5 million are deaf in both ears.** At least one out of every ten of us has difficulties hearing on the phone or in a conversation.

About 1 in 1,000 babies are born with hearing loss, about half of whom have a genetic, or inherited, reason for their loss. Deafness or hearing impairment may also be caused by noise or trauma, sensitivity to certain drugs or medications, and viral or bacterial infections.

Approximately 10 million people in the United States have permanent, irreversible hearing loss from noise or trauma. It is the most common occupational disease, with 44% of carpenters, 48% of plumbers, and 90% of miners reporting a perceived hearing loss. **Additionally, about 30 million people are exposed to dangerous levels of noise each day.**

Tinnitus, a ringing, buzzing or roaring in the ears, often accompanies hearing loss and can be severely debilitating. Almost 15 percent of adults aged 45 years and older suffer from tinnitus.

For many people, though, hearing loss is gradual. They may not even realize the problem until friends and family complain that they turn the TV up too loud or seem to have a hard time following a conversation.

A complete hearing test is the best way to find out how your hearing is now.

It will also give you a baseline in case problems develop in the future. Additionally, the test will reveal any signs of noise-related hearing loss so you can take steps to protect your hearing and prevent hearing loss.

Most insurance coverage, including Medicare, will pay for hearing tests recommended by your doctor.

More information is available from the American Academy of Audiology at www.audiology.org and the National Institute on Deafness located at www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/wise/index.htm

Hearing Health Quick Test

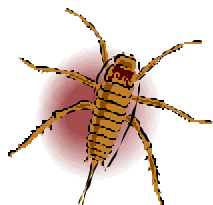
Answering YES to any of the following questions may mean that you have a hearing problem.

Answering YES to several questions strongly suggests that a hearing check is necessary.

1. Do you experience ringing or noises in your ears?
2. Do you hear better with one ear than with the other?
3. Have any of your relatives had a hearing loss?
4. Have you had any significant noise exposure at work, during recreation or in military service?
5. Do you find it difficult to follow a conversation in a noisy restaurant or crowded room?
6. Do you sometimes feel that people are mumbling or not speaking clearly?
7. Do you experience difficulty following dialogue in the theater?
8. Do you sometimes find it difficult to understand a speaker at a public meeting or a religious service?
9. Do you find yourself asking people to speak up or repeat themselves?
10. Do you find men's voices easier to understand than women's?
11. Do you experience difficulty understanding soft or whispered speech?
12. Do you sometimes have difficulty understanding speech on the telephone?

This article is courtesy of Joan Cassidy from the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons. She can be reached at NVRCLoudoun@aol.com Hearing Health Quick Test is adapted from the American Academy of Audiology.

Lyme Disease in Loudoun County



Since 1995, the number of Loudoun residents getting Lyme disease each year has increased from 3 to 89!!!

About 16,000 Americans get Lyme Disease annually.

Lyme Disease is spread to people from infected small, black-legged deer ticks. **Loudoun County residents at highest risk of being bitten by a deer tick include those who hike or hunt in the woods or work or play in residential areas surrounded by woods or overgrown brush.**

About 1 to 2 weeks after infection, a red, “bulls-eye” rash appears at the tick site. The rash may be accompanied by fever, headache, fatigue, and muscle aches.

The diagnosis of Lyme disease is made by a history of this rash and other symptoms, particularly if the person has been in an area infested with deer ticks. Blood tests can also be helpful if the history is less clear cut.

If diagnosed early, antibiotics are very effective at treating Lyme disease. If not treated, infected people may develop arthritis, neurologic problems or heart problems.

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Please Visit Our Web Sites on the Internet:

Virginia Department of Health: <http://www.vdh.state.va.us>

Loudoun County Department of Health:
<http://www.loudoun.gov/depts/health.htm>

How Can You Stay Safe From Lyme Disease?

When going into areas where ticks like to live, such as woodlands and areas with overgrown grass:

- Wear light colored, long sleeve shirts and pants and tuck your pants legs into your socks.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin and clothes.
- Since a deer tick needs to be attached to you for 36 hours to transmit disease, if you go into tick infested areas, remember to do a skin tick check every day.
- If you think you may have been infected with Lyme disease, see your doctor.